

**Birmingham
Natural History
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

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Dissolution of the Society

For some time, the Society has had falling numbers attending meetings, and difficulty in finding people willing or able to become officers. Towards the end of 2021, the situation was reached that there were simply not enough officers left to operate the Society, and no prospect of finding sufficient new ones. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society was held on 20 May 2022, at which it was agreed unanimously, but with great sadness, that the Society should be dissolved, and its financial assets divided between the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust. The Birmingham & Midland Institute has agreed to take the Society's library. It is intended to maintain a website for some years to keep alive the name and history of the Society, and a grant has been given to Clare Hinchliffe to enable this. Council will continue to manage the Society until all assets have been disposed of.

Treasurer's Report

As meetings after March 2020 were cancelled because of Covid-19, the last audited balance sheet was that for 2019, signed off on 2 March 2020. Unaudited balance sheets for 2020 and 2021 were circulated to Council, and an interim balance sheet for 2022 up to 18 May 2022 was prepared. All three were presented to the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 20 May 2022. Copies, and minutes of the EGM, can be made available to members who did not attend, either by e-mail or by post, on request (contact details are at the end of this newsletter). The summary presented to the EGM is reproduced below.

Summary of Accounts 2020 to May 2022

	<i>Bank and cash</i>	<i>Total including shares</i>
Brought forward from 2019	21,649	94,705
One-off income in 2020	2,300	
Recurrent income in 2020	1,787	
Production of <i>Proceedings</i>	-405	
Other recurrent expenditure in 2020	-340	
<u>Grants in 2020</u>	<u>-1,886</u>	
Carried forward to 2021	23,105	86,945
 Brought forward from 2020	23,105	86,945
Income in 2021	1,397	
Recurrent expenditure in 2021	-51	
<u>Grants in 2021</u>	<u>-7,500</u>	
Carried forward to 2022	16,951	96,667
 Brought forward from 2021	16,951	96,667
Income to 18 May 2022	812	
<u>Recurrent expenditure to 18 May 2022</u>	<u>-97</u>	
18 May 2022 balance	17,666	98,909

Update

An interim payment of £6,000 has been made to each wildlife trust and the Society's shares have been transferred to one or other of them. Share prices fell sharply after the interim balance sheet was prepared on 18 May; using share prices as of 16 June, a total of £88,414 has been distributed so far. The Society retains some £5,000 to cover any additional responsibilities and expenses until its dissolution is complete. One such expense will be the cost of transporting the Society's library to the Birmingham & Midland Institute.

Margaret Kingsbury, RIP

Margaret Kingsbury, who died in November 2020, was a long time member of the Society, serving it in various capacities. When the Society managed the Edgbaston Pool Reserve (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) under an agreement with what was then English Nature, Margaret was one of those most involved. She was appointed as the Secretary of the Society's Reserve Committee in 1999/2000. She later wrote that "I thought that all I would be doing was taking the committee minutes .. and that if anything more was needed I would be told what to do by someone who knew what should be done." However, she then realized that "nothing much was being achieved" and set about ensuring that this changed.

After I became President of the Society for the second time in 2008, I took over chairing the Reserve Committee. I then realized the massive amount of work that Margaret did in the Reserve, working there herself as well as directing the University of Birmingham conservation volunteers. Few people in the Society understood the time and energy that Margaret put into the Reserve, largely single-handed.



In 2010, Steve Lane and Steven Falk published a report on a survey of the insects of the SSSI they had carried out in 2008 and 2009. They wrote "First and foremost, we would like to thank Margaret Kingsbury whose limitless enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge are inspirational. Margaret's familiarity with the site enabled us to access every conceivable nook and cranny and to avoid the many hazards that are present. Margaret arranged access to the site, often at short notice and she accompanied us on all visits. We very much enjoyed the chats we had!" The photograph of Margaret above was taken by Steven Falk in the Reserve.

As Margaret became less able to work in the Reserve, and since there was no-one to replace her, sadly the Society had to give up its management (the task was taken over by the adjacent golf club).

From 2005 to 2018 inclusive, Margaret was the Treasurer of the Society. I worked alongside her as the Assistant Treasurer for some years, until I took over in 2019. She and I had some memorable battles with Santander over our savings account, which they would not allow her to close, because they said she could not prove her identity, having neither a passport nor a driving license. We eventually managed to persuade them to let us have the money. I have to say that Margaret was considerably more patient than I was! Until her memory began to fail in 2018, Margaret's accounts were meticulous, with everything beautifully filed and marked up by year.

Independently of the Society, Margaret contributed to the Flora of Birmingham and the Black Country, published in 2013. As well as engaging in the field work that was required to amass records, she researched and authored the section on the history of human occupation (pages 118–129). She also made a very significant contribution as a volunteer in the Lapworth (geology) Museum of the University of Birmingham.

Margaret's funeral was live-streamed due to Covid restrictions, and I was able to represent the Society in this way. The family were grateful for the information we were able to supply about her contributions to natural history. The photograph taken by Steven Falk in the Reserve was used in the order of service.

Peter Coxhead

Roy Ledbury, RIP

Roy Ledbury was a long time member of the Society, and its President from 2000 to 2002 inclusive. He then became one of the two Vice-Presidents until his death in December 2020, although unable to participate for some years before. His funeral was live-streamed, and I represented the Society in this way, after expressing our condolences to his family.

Roy was a member of the Warwickshire Moth Group, and a regular attender at meetings of the Warwickshire Biological Recording Group. His many activities included moth trapping in his garden. He was one of those thanked for his assistance by David Brown in his 2006 book *The Larger Moths of Warwickshire*, in which “RL” was one of the “featured recorders”.

Roy was an excellent photographer and gave illustrated talks on moths, butterflies and dragonflies, not only to the Birmingham Natural History Society but to others, including the Sutton Coldfield Natural History Society. He could be relied on to identify photographs of moths and dragonflies. His quiet enthusiasm and expertise will be missed by many people in the region with an interest in natural history.

Peter Coxhead

Other Notes

Flora of Sutton Park

Under the aegis of the Birmingham and Black Country Botanical Society, a team led by Ian Trueman has been preparing a new Flora of Sutton Park, to be published later this year. It will be broadly in the style of the much larger *Flora of Birmingham and the Black Country*, with accounts of each species accompanied by distribution maps. It builds on works published by the Birmingham Natural History Society, including J. E. Bagnall (1876), “Notes on Sutton Park: Its Flowering Plants, Ferns, and Mosses”, and R. C. Readett (1971), “A Flora of Sutton Park” (as well as on works published by the Sutton Coldfield Natural History Society). In 2021, Council agreed a grant of £7,500 towards the publication of this new Flora.

Phenology and Climate Change

‘Phenology’ is the study of recurring life cycles and phases. Long-term recording by amateur naturalists has been one of the foundations of the subject. Individual members and sections of the Birmingham Natural History Society have in the past been important sources of such records. In recent years, partly through the demise of sections (the very last being the Mycological Section), the Society has been less involved in this activity.

Phenological records are now showing the effects of climate change, which threatens to have a major negative impact on wildlife as crucial events become unsynchronized. Some examples were reported in *New Scientist* on 25 June 2022. Three events are interlinked in some parts of Europe: the emergence of oak foliage, the development of caterpillars on oak leaves, and the production of broods of Pied Flycatcher chicks. Temperature appears to provide a signal for all three events, but as mean temperatures rise, the first two are now occurring earlier than the third, with the result that adults miss the caterpillar peak, and cannot find the amount of food that their chicks need to survive. Another example is found in Greenland, where caribou migration is triggered by day length, but the growth of new shoots on which they feed is triggered by temperature, and is now occurring before the caribou arrive.

Postscript

This Newsletter was prepared by the Hon. Treasurer, due to the incapacity of the Hon. Secretary. It has been sent to all those who were paid-up or honorary members of the Society prior to the start of restrictions in March 2020. It is likely to be the last Newsletter before the final dissolution of the Society.

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